

109TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 5771

To reduce the incidence of suicide among veterans.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 12, 2006

Mr. BOSWELL (for himself, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. EVANS, Mr. MICHAUD, Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, Mr. FILNER, Mr. FORD, Mr. SALAZAR, Ms. HARMAN, Mr. EDWARDS, Mr. ROSS, Mr. HOLDEN, Mr. THOMPSON of California, Mr. TANNER, Mr. MARSHALL, Mr. ETHERIDGE, Mr. MELANCON, Ms. BEAN, Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi, Mr. BOREN, Mr. BERRY, Mr. McDERMOTT, Mr. STARK, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. HOYER, Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, Mr. OLVER, Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, and Mr. MURTHA) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To reduce the incidence of suicide among veterans.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Joshua Omvig Vet-
5 erans Suicide Prevention Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM FOR SUICIDE PREVEN-**
2 **TION AMONG VETERANS.**

3 The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall develop and
4 implement a comprehensive program for reducing the inci-
5 dence of suicide among veterans.

6 **SEC. 3. SPECIFICS OF PROGRAM.**

7 (a) **STAFF EDUCATION.**—The program shall provide
8 for mandatory training for appropriate staff and contrac-
9 tors (including all medical personnel) of the Department
10 of Veterans Affairs who interact with veterans. This train-
11 ing shall cover information appropriate to the staff or con-
12 tractor's job description. The training shall include infor-
13 mation on—

- 14 (1) recognizing risk factors for suicide;
15 (2) proper protocols for responding to crisis sit-
16 uations involving veterans who may be at high risk
17 for suicide; and
18 (3) best practices for suicide prevention.

19 (b) **SCREENING OF VETERANS RECEIVING MEDICAL**
20 **CARE.**—The program shall provide for screening of vet-
21 erans who receive medical care at a Department of Vet-
22 erans Affairs medical facility (including a center estab-
23 lished under section 1712A of title 38, United States
24 Code) for risk factors for suicide.

25 (c) **TRACKING OF VETERANS.**—The program shall
26 provide for appropriate tracking of veterans.

1 (d) COUNSELING AND TREATMENT OF VETERANS.—

2 The program shall provide for referral of at-risk veterans
3 for appropriate counseling and treatment.

4 (e) DESIGNATION OF SUICIDE PREVENTION COUN-

5 SELORS.—The program shall provide for the designation
6 of a suicide prevention counselor at each Department of
7 Veterans Affairs medical facility other than centers estab-
8 lished under section 1712A of title 38, United States
9 Code. Each counselor shall work with local emergency
10 rooms, police departments, local mental health organiza-
11 tions, and veterans service organizations to engage in out-
12 reach to veterans and improve the coordination of mental
13 health care to veterans.

14 (f) BEST PRACTICES RESEARCH.—The program shall
15 provide for research on best practices for suicide preven-
16 tion among veterans.

17 (g) SEXUAL TRAUMA RESEARCH.—The program
18 shall provide for research on mental health care for vet-
19 erans who have experienced sexual trauma while in mili-
20 tary service. The research design shall include consider-
21 ation of veterans of a reserve component.

22 (h) 24-HOUR MENTAL HEALTH CARE.—The pro-
23 gram shall provide for mental health care availability to
24 veterans on a 24-hour basis.

1 (i) HOTLINE.—The program may provide for a toll-
2 free hotline for veterans staffed by appropriately trained
3 mental health personnel and available at all times.

4 (j) OTHER COMPONENTS.—The program may pro-
5 vide for other actions to reduce the incidence of suicide
6 among veterans that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs
7 deems appropriate.

8 **SEC. 4. REPORT TO CONGRESS.**

9 (a) TIMING OF REPORT.—The Secretary shall submit
10 a report to Congress no later than 90 days after the enact-
11 ment of this Act.

12 (b) CONTENTS OF REPORT.—The report shall state
13 the status of the implementation of the program developed
14 pursuant to section 2. The report shall also state the
15 timeline and costs for complete implementation of the pro-
16 gram within two years.

17 **SEC. 5. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

18 It is the sense of Congress that—

19 (1) suicide among veterans suffering from post-
20 traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a serious prob-
21 lem; and

22 (2) the Secretary of Veterans Affairs should
23 take into consideration the special needs of veterans
24 suffering from PTSD in developing and imple-

- 1 menting the comprehensive program required by this
- 2 Act.

